

Make yourself heard

If you've only just regained your voice following the summer break, Janet Shell's advice will help you to remain loud and clear in the new term...

Q

MY VOICE IS A BIT MONOTONE AND IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED I DO MORE WITH IT, BUT I AM NOT SURE HOW TO BEGIN?

A

This is a more common problem than you might think and it's partly to do with speaking louder. When we raise the volume of our voice we tend to prolong the sounds we make, often with a more nasal tone. Also, we are not used to keeping up an 'interesting' voice so we might begin quite well

but, when we get more comfortable, lapse into a duller sound.

I find it is nearly always to do with energising the sound and staying engaged with what you are saying. If you are excited about what you have to say, it will show. Say something now in a really excited way and notice how much your face brightens. You will probably lift your eyebrows, and automatically make more space in your mouth by smiling. These are all mechanics associated with excellent speaking.

Record yourself being as dull as possible and then being as excited as possible. Now find the mid-way point. This will get you into the habit of speaking with more engagement; then you can take it as far as you like!

Q

I HAVE BEEN TOLD MY VOICE IS TOO QUIET. HOW CAN I BE LOUDER?

A

The last thing you want to do is just speak louder for the sake of it because that can lead to vocal problems down the line. The first thing I would suggest is making sure you are breathing before you speak as that will provide 'fuel' for your voice.

I worked with somebody

recently who had this problem and, when I watched her speak, she was raising her chin in order to raise her voice. By doing that she was constricting the space in her throat and squeezing the voice. When she lowered her chin her voice automatically became louder.

Something else to think of is lengthening the vowels in each word. This will slow your speech and encourage you to extend the tone in the word.

Q A

I START THE DAY REALLY WELL BUT BY THE END MY VOICE IS TIRED AND A BIT HUSKY. WHAT CAN I DO?

Rest! You may laugh at me, but it is what we do in the days following voice

overuse which is crucial. You need to find as many rest times as possible.

How are you using your voice when you speak? Does your throat feel tight and constricted? A husky voice is nearly always a result of putting too much pressure through the cords. Open up space in your mouth and aim your sound behind your top teeth, rather than pushing through your throat, as this will encourage resonance.

Take a breath before you talk. This will give a momentary resting moment and if you are searching for words in a sentence, avoid 'er' and just stay silent!

Where is your tongue as you read this? If it is clamped to the roof of your mouth, you are not really relaxed! It should be halfway down your mouth, with the tip of the tongue resting behind your bottom teeth! Any clenching of the jaw is counter productive.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Janet Shell combines her knowledge of voice and performance and travels nationally coaching teachers on how to enable healthier, more dynamic voice use. For, downloadable resources and some more great tips, visit the Talking Voice website (talkingvoice.net) or email janet@talkingvoice.net

